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AUTHOR Ediger, Marlow
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ABSTRACT

This paper expresses the opinion that reading about different minority groups is a must in a quality literature program. Each student should learn as much as possible about diverse minority groups, and literature on minority groups needs adequate curriculum emphasis. Some books which can be a real value for African-American students are "Mississippi Challenge" by M. P. Walter, "The Year They Walked: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott" by B. Siegel, "Madame C. J. Walker: Self-Made Millionaire" by P. and F. McKissack, and "Thurgood Marshall: A Life for Justice" by J. Haskins. Biographies provide good role models for young persons, since biographical content indicates what can be done by individuals in difficult situations. The teacher might guide students in choosing a book to read and may wish to have a conference with the reader after he or she has completed a book, following an informal set of questions on the material. An ultimate goal in the literature curriculum is to foster lifelong learning among the participants. (NKA)

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# DIVERSITY AND ADOLESCENT LITERATURE

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Adolescent students need to study, learn, and appreciate literature in its divers forms. Literature on minority groups needs adequate emphasis in the curriculum. Enrichment of experiences and of life itself may come from a quality literature curriculum. Opportunities to learn here are numerous indeed. Students need to avail themselves of these opportunities. There needs to be reading materials on diverse levels of achievement so that the learner may select a tradebooks to read on his/he present reading level. Thus the involved learner may comprehend content read. Also, the contents read should provide for diversity of interests. Learners vary on subject matter content that is of personal interest. Thus the ideas gleaned from reading should meet personal interest needs. I will focus on one minority group, basically, which is the African- American in my discussion. Library book content may become a part of an ongoing resulted social studies unit or a part of a reading unit taught. Books selected by the student might also be read for sheer enjoyment and appreciation.

## African - American Literature for the Adolescent

The student needs to be the chooser of which library book to read. If a learner finds difficulty in making the decision, the teacher might guide pupils in choosing a book to read. The teacher may wish to have a conference with the learner after he/she has completed reading a book. Here cooperatively, the student with teacher guidance may decide upon how the former is to be evaluated in comprehending the contents of the library book. The conference must stimulate students to do more reading of African American literature. An ultimate goal in the literature curriculum is to foster lifelong learning among among participants.

Mississippi Challenge (by Mildred Pitts Walter. New York: Bradbury Press, 1992) fits well in to criterion of meeting interests, purposes, and motivation needs of adolescence. The contents emphasize struggles that blacks of Mississippi had in securing the right to vote. A brief history of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

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Committee (SNCC) and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) is described by Ms. Walter and their assistance in helping blacks obtain the right to vote. Readers are assisted in understanding the bombings, jailing, losing of jobs, and deaths faced by blacks in this struggle. There are numerous questions which students individually and in committees can discuss after having read the contents. These include the following:

1. Do African Americans still face problems of discrimination? If so, in which areas of life?
2. Why does discrimination between racial groups occur?
3. What can one do to work toward improving relations of diverse racial groups?
4. How did organizations such as SNCC and MFDP assist blacks in obtaining increased civil rights?
5. What can be done to remedy past discrimination of African Americans?

Content read by students in the literature curriculum should be useful. Thus students can acquire utilitarian values from reading trade books to guide in improving human relations.

Another quality book for students to read is How My Family Lives in America ( by Susan Kuklin, New York: Bradbury Press,1992). Ms. Kuklin wishes to have students notice likenesses and differences among three racial groups such as Sengalese Americans, Taiwanese Americans, and Puerto Ricans. She wrote her book which emphasizes her visits with three children and their families. The children are Samu who is Sengalese American, April who is Taiwanese American, and Eric who is Puerto Rican. Common words for each of the three native languages of these children are listed based on illustrations. There are ethnic recipes, songs, dances, and recreational endeavors that students might experience which are contained in the book How My Family Lives in America.

Questions for students to discuss with teacher guidance might be

the following:

1. Which kinds of foods do you like best? Compare your favorite foods with those listed of the three children whose native countries are discussed in the above named library book.

2. How do the dances of Senegal, Taiwan, and Puerto Rico compare with what is common in the United States?

3. Are there sounds in Sengalese, Taiwanese, and Spanish (Puerto Rico) that are not in evidence in English?

4. How do customs differ among the three groups mentioned in number three above?

5. What can be done to learn more about others from different minority groups?

Through literature, students can learn much about the feelings, values, and goals of African Americans, Asiatic Americans, and Hispanics, Native Americans, among others, in society. Learners can be encouraged to read content pertaining to individuals and groups not representing the dominant culture in the societal arena. By introducing a few library books on this topic, students may well be motivated to read and appreciate subject matter read. The general library in school and the library corner in the classroom should have an attractive area for library books on minority groups in society. An appealing bulletin board display containing a caption, interesting illustrations, and a brief summary or abstract of selected library books can do much to entice learners to do more reading than formerly. Students and teachers telling stories of favorite library books read is another avenue of encouraging learner reading achievement. The teacher needs to appraise if students are doing an increased amount of reading. Teacher observation, questionnaires, and conferences with pupils individually or in small groups assist the teacher in ascertaining how much pupils have read as well as the degree of enthusiasm involved in reading.

There are numerous approaches which may be used to evaluate learner achievement, particularly when a student has completed reading a library book on an individual basis. Among others, these include the

following:

1. drawing one or more scenes covering content read.
2. pantomiming selected subject matter read.
3. writing play parts for a formal dramatization.
4. choosing several main ideas which are basic to the author.s writing.
5. describing the setting, characterization, plot, theme, and/or point of view in the contents of the library book.
6. telling in summary form about the style of writing of the author.
7. doing a mural on related content.
8. making a diorama to portray selected generalizations.
9. planning and implementing a bulletin board display on one or more books read.
10. writing test items to emphasize major concepts contained in the reading.

The above listed items can be used to appraise learner progress in content read pertaining to any literary selection.

The library book entitled The Year They Walked: Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott (by Beatrice Siegel, New York: Fourwinds Press, 1992) is fascinating reading about African Americans and about women as minority groups in decision making in the United States. The author of this book stresses the importance of common people who did much to emphasize human rights in the United States. Rosa Parks had to sit in back of a bus as did all black people in 1955-56, among other years. Blacks even then had to give up their seats if a white person entered the bus and the front seats were all taken. They had to enter the bus through the rear door only, even though paying for the ride was done next to the bus driver in the front Of the bus. Seated in the back of the bus, Rosa was tired from working during the day and was asked to give her seat to a white person who had just entered the bus. Rosa, of course, refused to do so and was arrested.

People who participated in civil rights promotion in Montgomery,

Alabama during the 1950's came from all walks of life. Ordinary people who had jobs and came from different racial and socioeconomic levels participated. The contents in the book stresses the importance of people working together to solve problems pertaining to racial segregation. Ordinary people working together can make a difference to rid a society of ills and injustices. There are numerous vital issues that student need to discuss with teacher assistance. These include the following:

1. What are some changes that you see need to be made to bring forth more justice in society?
2. What are some root causes of injustices toward racial groups, such as the African American, the Hispanic, and the Native American?
3. Who are the "Rosa Parks" today who assist in bringing good will to people?
4. Why do people fear to work for increased justice toward minority groups today?
5. Who are your heroes today pertaining to people who come from minority groups?

Students need to experience problem identification and working toward necessary solutions. They should experience critical and creative thinking experiences within the framework of problem solving.

The book Madam C. J. Walker: Self- Made Millionaire (by Patricia and Frederick McKissack, Hillsdale, New Jersey: Enlow Publishers, 1992) tells about Madam C.J. Walker who rose from being the daughter of slaves to being a millionaire. Ms. Walker developed and sold hair products for African American women. She later did much philanthropical work as well as engage in civil rights activities. From being the daughter of a slave to being a millionaire plus charitable work exemplified the characteristics of Ms. Walker.

1. How did Ms. Walker develop motivation to overcome major obstacles, such as poverty and racial discrimination, in life?
2. What influences from her parent(s) guided Ms. Walker to achieve so optimally?
3. What hinders people from attaining more optimally?

4. How does poverty affect people in society?

5. Why was slavery perpetuated as a way of life, up to 1865 approximately, in a nation that stressed democracy such as the United States?

There are numerous issues in life that are complex indeed and irony is involved, such as the United States advocating democracy and yet having slavery as a legal institution until 1865. Students need to read, study, and analyze content read to identify and solve problems. The solutions sought stress that which is of benefit to all and does not minimize the individual.

Thurgood Marshall: A Life for Justice (by James Haskins, New York: Henry Holt and Company,1992) is written about the first African American Supreme Court Justice. Justice Marshall (1908-1994) saw and experienced racial discrimination. He observed lynching, segregation, and violence directed toward African Americans. Thurgood Marshall saw that "separate but equal" facilities and situations for blacks being highly discriminating toward African Americans. The results of the Plessey versus Ferguson case of 1896 adhered to the legality of separate but equal facilities being lawful under the United States constitution. Justice Marshall became very well known when in 1954 the results of the Brown versus Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas case overturned the separate but equal concept in law. Thus a black child educated in a segregated school could not receive an equal education as compared to white pupils. Integration of the races in school was in order.
The facilities for black pupils were greatly inferior to that of white pupils in Topeka, Kansas as well as at other institutions of learning. Thurgood Marshall was the attorney arguing against the separate but equal doctrine at the Brown versus Board of Education court case which went all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

In discussing content from Thurgood Marshall: a Life for Justice, The teacher may guide students in discussing the following, among other questions:

1. Which changes did Marshall perceive early in life that needed to

be made in the United States?

2. Which qualities did he possess which made for becoming an outstanding attorney as well as Supreme Court Justice?

3. Which changes should be made, do you think, to further emphasize equality among the races?

4. How does one develop courage to challenge outdated ideas, such as separate but equal facilities for the races?

5. What do you admire most about Thurgood Marshall?

Students need to read biographies which provide role models for individuals. Biographical content indicates what can be done in difficult situations by human beings. Interest, feeling, and emotion can run high when reading a biographical book. These feelings, along with the involved subject matter, can certainly propel an an individual to pursue and complete the reading of a library book.

## In Closing

Students should read library books pertaining to diverse interests and purposes. Reading about different minority groups in a quality literature program is a must. An adequate number of books need to be available so that each student may choose that which meets personal needs. Library books need to be on different reading levels so that students may achieve optimally regardless of possessed skills and abilities.

Each student should learn as much as possible about diverse minority groups. Information acquired should assist the learner to live harmoniously with others in the societal arena. All forms of discrimination should be eliminated. People have much worth and barriers to their attainment hinders progress and goodwill in society.